DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 460 156 TM 033 631

AUTHOR Hulley, Kathy S.
TITLE Gender Bias: What Are the Current Issues?
PUB DATE 2001-11-00
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (30th, Little Rock, AR, November 14-16, 2001).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Gender Issues; Higher Education; *Sex Bias; Sex Discrimination; Sex Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

Gender bias can have many detrimental effects in education, including effects on teacher behavior, student performance, and the subject choices made by students. Various studies have shown that teachers tend to provide more specific and instructive feedback for boys and that males are likely to receive more teacher attention, most of it corrective. Teachers are unaware of their actions, and old habits are hard to change when they do become aware of their actions. Students themselves have conceptions about gender roles and abilities, and these also affect their conduct and the ways teachers react. A review of the literature has found that curriculum can have an impact on gender bias. Preservice teachers must be taught about the issues to help them become more reflective. Professional development can help teachers become aware of gender bias to treat all students more equitably. Among research needs in the area of gender bias is a measurement survey to measure gender bias behavior. (Contains 43 references.) (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 460 156

GENDER BIAS: WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ISSUES

Presented by

Dr. Kathy S. Kulley

Associate Professor of Graduate Studies

Lincoln Memorial University

Harrogate, TN

Mid-South Educational Research Association
Little Rock, Arkansas

2001

TM033631

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Hulley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

GENDER BIAS: WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ISSUES?

Kathy S. Hulley, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Graduate Studies
Lincoln Memorial University
Harrogate, TN

According to Davis (2000), the definition of gender bias is the inequitable treatment of males and females, which is deeply rooted and perpetuated by education (Mickelson & Smith, 1991). Many factors of socialization affect individual attitudes about gender equity. Variables such as verbal and non-verbal behavior, classroom management, curriculum, teaching strategies, and peer competitiveness influence interactions between teachers and students and among students themselves. Because people cannot rid themselves of a gender identity, females cannot compete equally in an educational environment thus making their position in society directly related to the mistreatment they received in school (Bauer, 2000). Bauer (2000) is of the opinion that textbooks depicting stereotypical behaviors and characteristics of a particular gender, a lack of attention to females in history, classroom interactions, and school playground and lunchroom interactions contribute to gender inequity in the school. The implications are that boys have higher self-esteem and confidence while girls have lower self-esteem and thus speak out less in the school environment. Societal stereotyping by parents, peers, and teachers cause discrepancies in education (Eccles, 1989). Behavior of teachers toward males and females is different and are a result of perceptions of gender roles through societal stereotyping. Detrimental effects in education include teacher behavior, student performance, and subject choices made by students. While individuals are verbal about equality, their behavior does not always reflect equality (Taylor & Mardle, 1986). Female teachers were found to be more egalitarian in their attitudes toward gender than male teachers (Massey & Christensen, 1990 and McKinney, 1987).

Gender equity courses in universities have been added in recent years to curricula in undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Research in this area is not as current as it should be. In particular, there is a need for research in the area of teacher-student interactions regarding gender bias attitudes. Several areas in gender equity to address include (a) teacher non-verbal gender bias measurements, (b) gender-biased student behavior, (c) measurement surveys to determine gender bias in education of teachers and students, and (d) whether gender equity curricula contributes to improvement in gender bias.

Observations of teachers in various content areas have been used in studies to determine various ways that gender bias occurs. The existence of gender bias occurs with both genders of teachers at all levels of instruction. The average classroom activities prevent the notice of gender inequities.

Sadker & Sadker (1994) found that male students in comparison to female students benefit the most from classroom interaction. Female students do not appear to

receive as much interaction from teachers as male students. The cause of this could be a belief that one sex has superior abilities in certain areas and thus the use of gender bias teaching behaviors. In another study, Sadker & Sadker (1986) observed that boys responded out loud eight times more often than girls and teachers tended to accept the boys' answers while reminding the girls who responded out loud to raise their hands. Feedback from teachers is more specific and instructive for boys.

Another factor in teacher gender bias is the manner in which male and female students seek information and help from teachers. Students who initiate teacher-student interactions are more likely to receive teacher-initiated attention (Anderson & Adams, 1992; Irvine, 1986). Males usually receive more teacher attention which usually tends to be corrective attention.

Sadker and Sadker (1994) have found through numerous studies that most teachers, male and female, are gender biased and identified several characteristics of gender-biased teachers. The characteristics include:

1. Lack of Awareness
2. Sexist Language
3. Verbal Interactions
4. Non-verbal Interactions
5. Teaching Strategies
6. Classroom Management

Teachers are unaware of their actions and often the old habits are difficult to change when they do become aware of their actions. In addition, the use of "he" and "she" to refer to certain careers that people are involved in is sexist. Verbal interactions are higher with male students even if it is negative than with female students. Subtle cues such as body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, and eye contact indicate gender bias. LaFance (1985) found in his research that touch is most often used as a form of non-verbal interaction to keep females separate and unequal. Other studies show that people move closer to women than men. Teaching strategies can promote gender bias unless the appropriate terms are used when referring to examples, using inclusive language, and avoiding stereotyping male and female students. In the area of classroom management, teachers tend to interact more with males than females. The interaction can and usually is of the negative type. DeVoe (1991) found participation by students determines the amount of attention and accepting behavior from teachers. The more participation in class by a student, the more attention and acceptance that student receives.

A study done by McBride (1990) of physical education classes found what appeared to be little evidence to support gender-role stereotyping by teachers. However, Vertinsky (1984) in his study of physical education classes did find a difference in the treatment of female students due to their poor levels of motor skills and fitness. These studies were done six years apart, which could account for a greater awareness of gender equity observed by McBride in comparison to Vertinsky. During those six years, teacher education programs and other factors may have contributed to the education about gender bias.

Davis (2000) found in her study of two college physical education activity classes to determine how gender bias may manifest itself indications that female students received more verbal contacts than male students and females received more verbal praise and remediation than males. Davis used videotaped observations and qualitative research techniques to determine her research.

Weiller (2000) did a study to examine gender bias and gender differences in relation to teacher-student interaction in a physical education class. The study appears to contradict other studies of the 1980s but to a small degree coincide with more recent work. The study suggests that traditional attitudes toward boys and girls in elementary physical education are shifting and both teachers and students appear to have a more egalitarian view of their interactions.

In a study by Tatar and Emmanuel (2001), the attitudes and perceptions of teacher behavior regarding gender roles was investigated with the use of a questionnaire and the responses were analyzed according to gender and education setting. The results indicated that elementary school and females teachers were more gender egalitarian in comparison to male and secondary school teachers. Findings also indicated a lack of teacher awareness concerning the nature of gender stereotypes and their influences on students.

Quinn and Obenchain (1999) tested students' responses to gender in a general secondary methods course. An exam question of a hypothetical scenario was written using a gender-neutral name, Chris. The answers were analyzed and discussed with the class. The discussion centered on the use of the gender pronouns selected for Chris, what information did the students receive from their answer and discussion about their own gender biases, and the implications of this information for the teaching and learning in future classrooms. Discussion revealed the assumption of stereotypical gender characteristics, defensiveness of some responses by students, defaulting to male pronouns subconsciously, defensiveness about their own gender biases, and the importance of being careful about passing on to students any gender biases.

In an article that examined the written responses of students indicating resistance to feminism in teacher education, it uncovered conceptions of the students about women's subordination ranging from denial of its existence to despair over an absence of definitive solutions (Titus, 2000). Reviewing the literature revealed that McLaren (1989), Sleeter (1991), and Weiler (1988) reject the idea that classrooms are neutral sites for gender equity discussions and learning. The author of the study found that four postures reflect the thinking of students who resist feminism: deny, discount, distance, and dismay. The context of the course caused students to experience conflict and resistance. Denial manifested itself through resentment that the perception the student has of the world is incomplete or their experience is not sufficient to nullify a social pattern. Students who discount gender issues deem them unimportant and contextually irrelevant. Davis (1992) found that students who research the issues instead of listening to a lecture have lower resistance to preconceived ideas. Students tend to distance or dismiss the significance of gender issues or absolve themselves of responsibility and shift

blame to other factors. Students who are dismayed will write about their confusion and sometimes have depression concerning gender inequity. These students want to be told the solution instead of being sources of knowledge or problem-solvers.

Conclusions from reviewing the literature found that curriculum can have an impact on gender-bias. A continuation of stereotypical gender beliefs is disturbing. Pre-service teachers need to be aware of the issues and more reflective about dealing with gender bias in their classrooms. This would include self-awareness seminars. Leadership skills courses in all teaching areas are needed in gender training that include reasons for the existence of inequality, the damages it causes, and teaching skills needed to combat it.

Suggestions for fostering gender equity in classrooms by teachers include books that reflect diversity, open dialogue, promoting nonstereotypical activities and nontraditional professions, and retraining teachers to be aware of the messages sent to female students and adoption of non-bias behaviors (Quinn & Obenchain, 1999 and Bauer, 2000 and Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001).

Future research in this area of gender bias in education is needed. Brady and Eisler (1995) suggest the development of an interactional model of gender bias that looks at the behavior of the teacher and the students, as well as their interactions. Next, operational criteria needs to be defined and instruments developed to detect these criteria. Jones (1989b) suggests the need to measure the quality of interactions and to study different teaching styles and their affect on achievement (Davis, 2000). A measurement survey to determine gender bias behavior has not been located by this author and is suggested that one be developed for future research.

Reference:

Allsup, C. (1995). What's all this white male bashing? In: R. J. Martin (Ed.) Practicing What We Teach: confronting diversity in education. Albany, NY, State University of New York Press.

Anderson, J. A., & Adams, M. (1992). Acknowledging the learning styles of diverse student populations: Implications for instruction design. In L.L. Borde & N. V. N. Chism (Eds.), Teaching for diversity, 49, 19-33, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (1996). Gender Equity Resources for K-12 Teachers. Online: <http:www.aauw.org/4000/gender.html>

Bauer, K. S. (2000). Promoting gender equity in schools. Contemporary Education, 71 (2), 22.

Brady, K.L., & Eisler, R. M. (1995). Gender bias in the college classroom: A critical review of the literature and implications for future research. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 29 (1), 9-19.

Campbell, P. B. & Sanders, J. (1997). Uninformed but interested: findings of a national survey on gender equity in preservice teacher education, Journal of Teacher Education, 48, 69-75.

Davis, K. L. (Winter 2000). A case study in gender equity for basic instruction programs. Physical Educator, 57 (1), 46.

Davis, N. J. (1992). Teaching about inequality: student resistance, paralysis, and rage. Teaching Sociology, 20, 232-238.

DeVoe, D. E. (1991). Teacher behavior directed toward individual students in elementary physical education. Journal of Classroom Interaction, 26 (1), 9-14.

Eccles, J. & Blumenfeld, P. (1985). Classroom experiences and student gender: Are there differences and do they matter? In L. C. Wilkinson & C. B. Marett (Eds.), Gender influences in classroom interaction (pp. 79-114). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Eccles, J. (1989). Bringing young women to maths and science. In M. Crawford & M. Gentry (Eds.), Gender and thought: Psychological perspectives (pp. 36-58). New York: Springer-Veriag.

Grossman, H. & Grossman, S. H. (1993). In Issues in Education (Boston, MA, Allyn & Bacon).

Grossman, H. & Grossman, S. H. (1994). Gender issues in education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Holt-Reynolds, D. (1992). Personal history-based beliefs as relevant prior knowledge in course work. American Educational Research Journal, 29, 325-349.

Horgan, D. D. (1995). Achieving gender equity: Strategies for the classroom. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Irvine, J. J. (1986). Teacher-student interactions: Effects of student race, sex, and grade level. Journal of Educational Psychology, 78 (1), 14-21.

Jones, M. G. (1989b). Gender issues in teacher education. Journal of Teacher Education, 40 (1), 33-38.

Klein, R. D. (1987). The dynamics of the women's studies classroom: A review essay of the teaching practice of women's studies in higher education. Women's Studies International Forum, 10, 187-206.

LaFrance, M. (1985). The school of hard knocks: Nonverbal sexism in the classroom. Theory into Practice, 24 (1), 40-44.

LaFrance, M. (1991). School for scandal: Different educational experiences for females and males. Gender and Education, 3, 3-13.

Maher, F. A. & Thompson Tetreault, M. K. (1994). The Feminist Classroom. New York: Basic Books.

Massey, D. R. & Christensen, C. A. (1990). Student teacher attitudes to sex role stereotyping: Some Australian data. Educational Studies, 16, 95-107.

McBride, R. E. (1990). Sex-role stereotyping behaviors among elementary, junior high, and senior high school physical education specialists. Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 9 (4), 249-261.

Mickelson, R. A. & Smith, S. S. (1991). Education and the struggle against race, class, and gender inequality. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), Race, class, and gender: An anthology (pp. 359-376).

Neitz, M. J. (1985). Resistances to feminist analysis. Teaching Sociology, 12, 339-353.

Ropers-Huilman, B. (1998). Feminist Teaching in Theory & Practice: situating power and knowledge in poststructural classrooms. New York: Teachers College Press.

Quinn, R. J. & Obenchain (Sept/Oct 1999). Exploring gender biases in a genderal methods class. The Clearing House, 73 (1), 16-18.

Sadker, M. & Sadker, D. (1986). Sexism in the classroom: From grade school to graduate school. Phi Delta Kappa u, 67 (7), 512-515.

Sadker, M. & Sadker, D. (1994). Failing at fairness: How America's schools cheat girls. New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing Co.

Sikes, P. (1993). Gender and teacher education, in I. Siraj-Blatchford (Ed.). 'Race,' Gender and the Education of Teachers. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Sikes, P. J. (1991). Nature took its course? Student teachers and gender awareness. Gender and Education, 3, 145-162.

Skelton, C. & Hanson, J. (1989). Schooling the teachers: Gender and initial teacher education, in: S. Acker (Ed.). Teachers, Gender, and Careers. London: Falmer Press.

Sleeter, C. E. (Ed.) (1991). Empowerment Through Multicultural Education. New York: State Univeristy of New York Press.

Taylor, M. T. & Mardle, G. D. (1986). Students' attitudes toward gender roles. Educational Researcher, 28, 202-209.

The Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, (1992). The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.

Tatar, M. & Emmanuel, G. (Mar/Apr2001). Teachers' perceptions of their students' gender roles. The Journal of Educational Research, 94 (4), 215.

Thompson, B. (1989). Teacher attitudes: Complacency and conflict, in C. Skelton (Ed.) Whatever Happens to Little Women? Gender and Primary Schooling. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Titus, J. J. (Mar 2000). Engaging student resistance to feminism: 'How is this stuff going to make us better teachers?' Gender and Education, 12 (1), 21-37.

Vertinsky, P. A. (1984). In search of a gender dimension: An empirical investigation of teacher preferences for teaching strategies in physical education. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 16 (4), 425-430.

Walker, C. & Foote, M. M. (Winter 1999/2000). Emergent inquiry: Using children's literature to ask hard questions about gender bias. Childhood Education, 76 (2), 88-91.

Weiler, K. (1988). Women Teaching for Change: gender, class and power. South Hadley, MA: Bergen & Garvey.

Weiler, K. H. & Doyle, E. J. (2000). Teacher-student interaction: An exploration of gender differences in elementary physical education. Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance, 71 (3), 43-45.

Wilson, S. M. (1990). The secret garden of teacher education. Phi Delta Kappan, 72, 204-209.